

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 01011 021145Z

61

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 IO-14 SAB-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /152 W

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R 021055Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5535

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 1011

SECDEF FOR ASD/ISA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP EG US UK

SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS JOINT US/UK CANAL CLEARANCE PROJECT

1. CAIRO DAILY AKHBAR AL-YAWM HEADLINES MARCH 2: "GROMYKO CARRIES OFFERS FOR PARTICIPATION IN CANAL CLEARANCE AND RECONSTRUCTION." NEWSPAPER'S MOSCOW CORRESPONDENT CLAIMS GROMYKO, WHO ARRIVED CAIRO MARCH 1, CARRIES WITH HIM PROPOSALS CONCERNING SUEZ CANAL CLEARANCE AND RECONSTRUCTION.

2. HOWEVER, AHAM MARCH 2 QUOTES SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN MASHHUR AS SAYING THAT SCA HAS "ACCEPTED" A BRITISH NAVY "OFFER" TO HELP CLEAR CANAL. REPORTEDLY, HE SAID SCA HAS ACCEPTED A SIMILAR OFFER FROM US NAVY, AND MAERICAN EXPERTS HAVE ALREADY ARRIVED. THE BRITISH TEAM WILL OPERATE IN THE NORTHERN SECTION FROM THREE ELECTRONICALLY EQUIPPED SHIPS. THE AMERICANS WILL USE ELECTRONICALLY EQUIPPED HELICOPTERS AND BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CLEARING THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE CANAL, THE CANAL ENTRANCE, AND THE GULF OF SUEZ. MASHHUR REPORTEDLY ADDED THAT ALL CLEARING
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PAGE 02 CAIRO 01011 021145Z

OPERATIONS ARE EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN TWO MONTHS.

3. AHAM STORY IS AROUSING CONSIDERABLE INTEREST AMONG AMERICAN PRESS CORRESPONDENTS IN CAIRO. WE HAVE BEEN APPROACHED BY LOCAL AP BUREAU FOR CONFIRMATION. IN RESPONSE TO INQUIRY, PAO AND COMMERCIAL OFFICER HAVE BEEN GUIDED BY CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE AS SET OUT IN STATE 32673 AND DECLINED FURTHER COMMENT.

4. COMMENT: THE ABOVE ARTICLE IS WISHFUL THINKING. WHILE THE ROYAL NAVY HAS MADE AN "OFFER" IN PRINCIPLE TO CLEAR EXPLOSIVES FROM THE CANAL, THEY HAVE NOT FINALIZED EITHER OFFER OR TECHNIQUES TO BE USED. ROYAL NAVY TEAM IS NOW EXPECTED ARRIVE CAIRO MARCH 4, 1974, TO SURVEY CANAL. US/NAVY/ARMY TEAM HAS COMPLETED THEIR SURVEY AND DEPARTED CAIRO MARCH 2. ALTHOUGH TEAM SUBMITTED SITREPS DURING ITS STAY HERE, NO FINAL REPORTS HAS YET BEEN PREPARED. DESPITE CONSTANT EGYPTIAN EFFORTS ELICIT FIRM US COMMITMENT, HAVE MADE CLEAR IT WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO COMMIT USG TO ANY SUCH PROJECT. EILTS

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